



## **Planning Related Boards and Commissions** (Where Citizens are In Charge)

The work of our local government involves more than the City Council and the paid employees. It also involves dozens of volunteers, who give of their talents and time to help make High Point a better place to live, work and play. There are nine different boards and commissions whose members are citizens appointed by the City Council. Three of these are connected with various aspects of planning, development and building in the city – the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Board of Adjustment, and the Historic Preservation Commission. Each one is described in more detail below. Ready to get involved?!

One way you can get involved is as a member of the ***Planning & Zoning Commission***. High Point's Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z) is a nine-member board that advises the City Council on planning and zoning requests that require the Council's approval. The City's authority to appoint Planning Boards and Commissions is established by the State in Chapter 160A, Article 19 of the North Carolina General Statutes. All members of the P&Z must reside within the city limits, except one member who must reside within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The Guilford County Board of Commissioners appoints the ETJ representative, usually following a recommendation by the City Council. Although the remaining eight members each represent the city as a whole, and can reside anywhere in the City, it is the Council's policy to maintain a balanced representation from each of the City's six voting wards.

The P&Z holds public meetings to review and make recommendations to the City Council on a variety of items, including requests to make changes to the zoning map or the text of the Development Ordinance, amendments to previously approved rezoning requests, special use



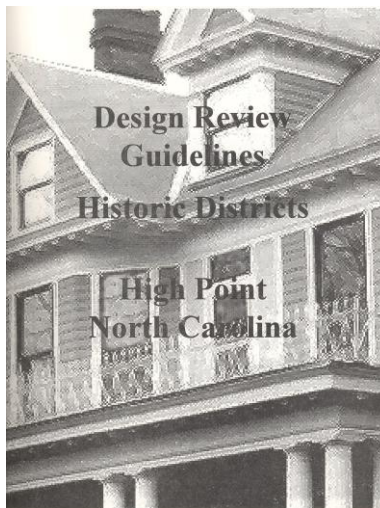
permits, and street abandonments. The P&Z also makes recommendations on the adoption of the Land Use Plan and other area plans or studies, and makes the final decision on street renaming petitions. Regular meetings of the Planning & Zoning Commission are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

Since some of the rules in the City's Development Ordinance don't always work in every situation, the City has established a ***Board of Adjustment***. The Board of Adjustment is a citizen board that determines how regulations should apply to properties with unique challenges. High Point's Board of Adjustment (BOA) is made up of five regular members plus several alternate members. Four of the five regular members and all alternate members are appointed by the City Council from within the city limits, and one regular member is appointed from the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Like the P&Z, this is usually done by the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, based on a recommendation by the City Council.

The BOA is a "quasi-judicial" body, meaning it operates somewhat like a court. Unlike the P&Z, which makes recommendations, the Board of Adjustment renders decisions based on sworn testimony given during a public hearing where applicants, opponents and staff submit evidence. Board members ask questions and determine the facts of each case. All discussion related to a case takes place during the hearing. BOA decisions are final. If a person wishes to appeal a decision made by the Board, it is filed with the Superior Court, not with the City Council.

The BOA hears three types of cases – variances, special exceptions and administrative appeals. Variances involve relief from the strict and literal interpretation and enforcement of zoning provisions in the Development Ordinance that result in a property owner losing privileges shared by other properties in the same zoning district. A hardship or practical difficulty that is unique to the property, and not caused by the applicant, must be found by the BOA to be present for a variance to be approved. Special exceptions allow certain land use related activities normally prohibited by the zoning regulations to take place, such as the expansion of a non-conforming use, as long as the activity meets the general intent of the original regulations and can meet all specific regulations contained in the Development Ordinance that pertain to it. An administrative appeal is heard by the BOA when a zoning decision or ordinance interpretation made by Planning & Development Department staff, or a decision of an appointed board such as the Historic Preservation Commission, is challenged. Regular meetings of the Board

of Adjustment are held on the second Thursday of each month at 3:00 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.



If you are passionate about preserving High Point's historic resources, then the ***Historic Preservation Commission*** might be for you. The High Point Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a nine-member body appointed by the City Council. Not more than one member may be appointed from each of the city's three local Historic Districts – Johnson Street, Sherrod Park, and West High Avenue. The remaining members are appointed from throughout the City.

The HPC promotes historic preservation, and examines and makes recommendations on historic designations (such as the Guilford County Landmark designation or National Register designation) for individual properties or districts with historical significance. The HPC also reviews and issues Certificates of Appropriateness. A Certificate of Appropriateness must be obtained by property owners for most exterior changes to structures within a local historic district to ensure they are in line with the adopted design review guidelines and the historic characteristics of the property. However, City staff can approve a variety of limited activities related to general maintenance and repair of historic structures and properties, referred to as minor works, which do not require review by the HPC. Regular meetings of the Historic Preservation Commission are held on the second Thursday of the month at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

All the members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and Historic Preservation Commission serve three-year terms and are eligible for two consecutive terms. Ready to get involved? Call the Planning & Development Department at 883-3328 for an application to get on the list to fill vacancies as they occur. For additional information about any of these Boards and Commissions, e-mail the Citizen University faculty using the link on our home page.